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WRITING IN BUSINESS CLASSROOMS AND THE WORKPLACE

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A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
English Composition

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by  
Sheryl Tschetter

June 1999

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by  
Sheryl Tschetter


June 1999

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis compares the types of writing taught in upper-division business classes to that produced in the workplace. The study looks at how research in composition theory relates writing to cognitive development and looks for links in classroom pedagogy. The research attempts to locate writing assignments and tasks that lead to genre knowledge and metacognition for the students.

To accomplish this, chapter one discusses how research in Composition Theory has conclusively linked the writing process and the writing product to learning. Chapter two discusses how three businesswomen use genre knowledge and critical thinking to attain goals in specific business situations through their writing processes. Chapter three attempts to locate intersections between the writing and writing processes of the three business people to the writing produced by students in three business classrooms. Chapter four concludes the study by identifying which writing assignments worked in the three classrooms and by offering suggested pedagogy for future classes.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I also wish to acknowledge the contributions of three additional dynamic women: Stephanie, Lisa, and Cathleen. The input and tireless effort of these three women made the comparative analysis of this thesis possible. In addition, the hospitality of three professors of Management during winter quarter, 1999, and the willingness of two Business students to share their experiences provided invaluable ethnographic material.

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## INTRODUCTION

A major issue of importance in composition theory and discourse since the 1970s is the concept of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) that calls for the inclusion of writing in all classes taught in all disciplines. This call results from research that develops a correlation between the writing process and cognitive development. In the field of business, for example, employees must use critical thinking to solve problems and analyze complex, fast-changing issues. This requires extensive knowledge in genre conventions and the metacognition necessary to realize how the purpose and goal of a rhetorical situation shapes the form and content of writing. Academic business classrooms need to develop pedagogies that include these elements to help students develop these abilities and succeed both in the classroom and after graduation. Writing is a unique and integral part of this pedagogy.

This research attempts to identify the genre knowledge and critical thinking used by three businesswomen and compare their writing products and writing processes to those taught in three business classrooms to determine any intersections. Finally, the study offers suggested

pedagogy that includes explicit instruction in genre knowledge and activities that lead to metacognition.

## CHAPTER ONE

Composition studies encompasses many different theories relating to how important writing is to cognition and skills development. In this chapter, a variety of theorists are examined to link the writing process, writing-across-the-curriculum and the teaching of genre conventions to success in the workplace.

### THE HISTORY OF WAC IN AMERICAN EDUCATION

David R. Russell recounts the history of WAC. He begins his exploration in the 1870s when "written papers and examinations came into wide use . . . driving out formal recitation and oral examination" (3). He continues his discussion into the early 1990s where WAC continues to be a site of discussion between theorists in the composition community and a site of contention across disciplinary boundaries.

Citing philosophers such as John Dewey and research projects such as the 1892 Harvard Committee on Composition and Rhetoric, Russell's research into the history of teaching writing in America leads to his conclusion that "writing instruction in America has largely been separate from other instruction and has been relegated to lower levels: to first-year composition courses taught primarily by junior, temporary, or graduate instructors. . . . Instead

of being an integral part of teaching and learning" (4). This is just the beginning of the academy's marginalization of writing, a practice that continues today. Russell affords his audience an overview of three literacy crises faced in America before 1970 to set up his premise for the inclusion of WAC in today's academic curriculums.

According to Russell, the literary crisis of the 1870s offers a look at the beginning of writing's marginalization that eventually leads to the need for WAC when he identifies

a central contradiction in the American mass education system: [that] its organizing principle—disciplinary specialization—recognizes no integral role for writing, and in many ways the disciplines have resisted the sharing of responsibility for writing instruction; yet schools and colleges are expected to teach students to write in ways sanctioned by the disciplines" (5).

Today, this marginalization of writing continues in some sites denying writing's connection with critical literacy. Over 100 years later, this issue continues to be hotly debated in composition theory. For example, Linda Flower states:

Much of our public discourse talks about literacy as if it were a single, generalizable ability and tells schools to make students attain it by teaching grammatical correctness and one or two privileged literate practices... .The equation of literacy with correctness has a long and tenacious history in American schools... .The pedagogy of correctness has another

quality that may contribute to its staying power. Its drills and exercises, workbooks, texts, and potential for nationwide testing are efficient ways to manage, market, and deliver education. Correctness is big business" (11).

Flower's argument parallels and supports Russell's analysis of the three literary crises he examines and comes to the same conclusion: writing still remains marginalized outside the boundaries of English Studies, and its ability to improve cognition remains ignored in some instances.

When the American public perceives its educational system as delinquent in the teaching of literacy, it usually calls for the return to "basics," ignoring the need for a more cognitive approach. As Russell states, "The curriculum materials produced by research-oriented university instructors in the federally funded projects of the late 1950s and early 1960s were concerned primarily with *what* to teach and *when*, rather than *how* to teach it and *why*" (10). Russell credits the rise of Composition Studies for empowering English educators and researchers of the 1970s with a much more powerful pedagogy than a mere grammar response to the literacy crisis.

Russell shows how a revival of rhetoric as an academic discipline in the 1960s causes "Composition research [to acquire] a new disciplinary rigor and [produce] studies of the rhetorical, cognitive, and social dimensions of



writing, studies that in the mid-1970s would provide an intellectual basis for WAC" (12). By examining the historical movement of mass education over the last 100 years, Russell offers an understanding of the "situatedness" of WAC within the composition community and the potential barriers that hinder its extension across disciplines. Russell analyzes how the birth of Composition and Rhetorical studies moves past the focus on skills to concentrate on the theories and research that lead to the creation of WAC.

Following the volatile and chaotic period of the 1960s, the literacy crisis of the 1970s was initially blamed on what the public perceived as permissive academic attitudes. Russell, however, offers a different view by comparing this crisis to the similar ones in the 1870s, 1910s, and late 1940s to discover:

The mid-1970's crisis coincided with widening access to previously excluded groups. And like its predecessors, the mid-1970's uproar led to a renewed emphasis on mechanical correctness and 'skills'—now dubbed 'back to the basics'—accompanied by the usual remedial drill that is America's most reflexive response to a perceived lack of writing competence.

However, unlike the previous literacy crises, this one drew a more considered response in some quarters. America now had a corps of writing specialists to provide leadership, a resurgence of interdisciplinary interest in rhetoric; a growing body of research on writing. . .and a theoretical basis to allow for more than the usual remedial

and cosmetic changes in response to public outcry (14).

Through his historical view of American education and the growth of Composition as a discipline, Russell sets the stage to explain how

American reformers quickly adopted and adapted [James] Britton's classification of discourse into transactional, expressive, and poetic functions, particularly his valorization of expressive discourse in pedagogy, . . . and . . . borrowed British methods of qualitative research: a descriptive inquiry more philosophical than quantitative, attentive to the discourse of students and teachers, broadly humanistic, and free of the 'educationist' perspective so suspect in American higher education (15).

The collaborative efforts of researchers on both sides of the Atlantic played a major role in the creation of WAC as did other outside influences such as open admissions and the impact of the Bay Area Writing Project (14-15). These factors lead to the expanded perception of "writing as an integral part of learning (not a separate skill) transcend[ing] disciplinary boundaries" for the first time in America's educational history. The credit for the WAC movement gaining momentum, Russell contends, belongs to Elaine Maimon and Toby Fulwiler, each of whom established "widely influential programs" at their individual academic locations (15). As Fulwiler details, the collaboration necessary to achieve success in WAC programs is not without conflict.

## THE CONFLICT OF THE FIRST WAC PROGRAMS

Toby Fulwiler assesses his struggles with faculties to implement WAC programs at Michigan Technological University as well as other institutions. The focus of his personal assessment is to "set down, as frankly as possible, some of the lessons [he has] learned from overseeing a writing-across-the curriculum program and conducting faculty workshops for the past six years" (113). Fulwiler supports the ideological foundation of WAC as described by Janet Emig in the 1980s when he states that "from the beginning. . . We believed that to improve student writing we had to influence the entire academic community in which writing takes place, to make the faculty sensitive to the role of writing in learning as well as to the relationship of writing to other communication skills" (113). Although Fulwiler fully comprehends the necessity of writing as part of the cognitive learning process, the problems and benefits he encounters during his faculty workshops points out the conflictedness inherent in this interdisciplinary movement.

Fulwiler begins by breaking down his workshop experiences into specific categories; one of the general headings, titled *problems*, focuses on the obstacles inherent in any attempt to translate theory across

disciplinary boundaries. This section includes experiential knowledge that relates to the collaboration necessary for critical literacy to be achieved in all disciplines through the writing process. It discusses issues surrounding negative collaborative experiences among interdisciplinary faculty relating to "terminology, resistance, turf, translation, numbers, trust, dabbling, overselling, follow-up, and carrots" (114-120). A close examination of two of the sub-categories relating to *problems*, "terminology" and "resistance," points out how important the understanding of writing's ability to impact critical literacy becomes when discussing implementation of a WAC program.

Under the subheading "terminology," Fulwiler reports his disappointment in being unable to explain "exactly what the term 'expressive' writing means. . .to many teachers" outside the English arena. Having introduced his workshop attendees to James Britton's philosophical scheme for the functions of writing, Fulwiler is not prepared for the misunderstanding Britton's term "expressive" holds among those situated outside his own discourse community. His inability to articulate a satisfactory response to other teachers' belief that "expressive" means educational license sets his program back for over three years until he

and his associates can substitute other words for this term. His findings are interesting. Fulwiler writes that "expressive" writing in the form of "informal, personal, or journal writing, is of questionable value to faculty outside the humanities, and no matter what language you describe it in, you must be prepared for some unsettling questions" (115). As Fulwiler points out, "My School of Business friend tried to explain his colleagues' misconceptions: 'I think the attitude of the School of Business for the most part is that . . . transactional writing has been replaced by expressive writing, poor sentence structure and no concern for spelling'" (115). It is easy to understand how instructors whose discipline requires directness and correctness can misinterpret a term such as "expressive writing." The need to cross disciplinary boundaries is a major obstacle to WAC's full implementation. Each discourse community perceives its terminology and conventions as special, necessary, and unique. Careful negotiation of terms among disciplines and awareness of writing's integral role in learning is vital to the success of any WAC movement.

In his sub-category entitled "resistance," Fulwiler explains how he and his colleagues "learned right away that writing workshops cannot inspire or transform unmotivated,

inflexible, or highly-suspicious faculty members" (115). This statement speaks directly to the difficulty of translating the ideological belief that the writing process is linked to cognitive development to those outside the discourse of the English studies community. This is especially true in light of academic institutional demands of "publish or perish." Some instructors feel reluctant to include writing in the classroom because they perceive an increase in their workload. They believe the additional time it takes to grade writing potentially reduces their time for research and publication. Fulwiler shows that including writing in the classroom does not have to take an inordinate amount of time and he believes it is imperative that all instructors embrace the role of writing in developing critical literacy.

#### WRITING'S LINK TO COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

The effort of Janet Emig to present the correlation between writing and learning can be seen as one of many philosophical and seminal studies. Her stated contention that "Writing represents a unique mode of learning—not merely valuable, not merely special, but unique" serves as the focal point of her argument. To support this argument, Emig includes research from such distinguished contemporary psychologists as Lev Vygotsky, A. R. Luria, and Jerome

Bruner (7). Her ability to incorporate the work of researchers outside the boundaries of composition lends credibility to her correlation between writing and cognitive development and exemplifies interdisciplinary collaboration.

Emig's article describes how writing is connected to cognition by

establishing many contrasts, distinctions between (1) writing and all other verbal languaging processes—listening, reading, and especially talking; (2) writing and all other forms of composing, such as . . . painting . . . dance . . . film . . . ; and (3) composing in words and composing in the two other major graphic symbol systems of mathematical equations and scientific formulae . . . to describe as tellingly as possible *how* writing uniquely corresponds to certain powerful learning strategies. (7)

By pointing out the differences between writing and other languaging processes, Emig provides the groundwork for the importance of including writing in all classrooms.

Emig offers support for writing's unique link to learning in contrast to listening, talking, and reading by including references to articles by James Britton, Nancy Martin, Peter Medway, and James Moffett. These articles provide a platform upon which to build her argument of writing's distinction. These writers embrace philosophies that support talking as an important step prior to writing thereby allowing Emig a springboard upon which to compare

writing to speech. She includes Lev Vygotsky's belief that "written speech is a separate linguistic function, differing from oral speech in both structure and mode of functioning" (9). She also cites a result from the "first session of the Buffalo conference on Researching Composition" which states, "the first point of unanimity among the participant-speakers with interests in developmental psychology, media, dreams, and aphasia was that talking and writing were markedly different functions" (9). She concludes her discussion on the interdisciplinary research findings by listing 11 characteristics unique to writing that differentiates it from other modes of discourse. These are:

1. Writing is learned behavior; talking is natural, even irrepressible, behavior.
2. Writing then is an artificial process; talking is not.
3. Writing is a technological device—not the wheel, but early enough to qualify as primary technology; talking is organic, natural, earlier.
4. Most writing is slower than most talking.
5. Writing is stark, barren, even naked as a medium; talking is rich, luxuriant, inherently redundant.
6. Talk leans on the environment; writing must provide its own context.
7. With writing, the audience is usually absent; with talking, the listener is usually present.
8. Writing usually results in a visible graphic product; talking usually does not.
9. Perhaps because there is a product involved, writing tends to be a more responsible and committed act than talking.



10. It can be said that throughout history, an aura, an ambience, a mystique has usually encircled the written word; the spoken word has for the most part proved ephemeral and treated mundanely (ignore, please, our recent national history).
11. Because writing is often our representation of the world made visible, embodying both process and product, writing is more readily a form and source of learning than talking (9-10).

These 11 points of difference between writing as a mode of learning and other modes argue for inclusion of writing in every classroom in the academy. As Emig's research reaches beyond the boundaries of composition studies, so must the correlation between writing and learning reach back across those same boundaries to assist students in all disciplines in learning the conventions of their specialized fields and, hence, literacy.

Emig progresses toward her goal of proving writing's special link to cognition by calling on research conducted outside her community to support her belief that

Writing is also integrative in perhaps the most basic possible sense: the organic, the functional. Writing involves the fullest possible functioning of the brain, which entails the active participation in the process of both the left and the right hemispheres. Writing is markedly bispheral, although in some popular accounts, writing is inaccurately presented as a chiefly left-hemisphere activity, perhaps because the linear written product is somehow regarded as analogue for the process that created it; and the left hemisphere seems to process material linearly (11).

Emig makes a strong case for writing's distinct link to the learning process and for the need to investigate writing's role in literacy. She states:

This essay represents a first effort to make a certain kind of case for writing—specifically, to show its unique value for learning. . . .I hope that the essay will start a crucial line of inquiry; for unless the losses to learners of not writing are compellingly described and substantiated by experimental and speculative research, writing itself as a central academic process may not long endure (14).

Emig's study encapsulates the importance of writing to critical literacy in a few pages, but the ramifications of her findings can be seen in WAC movements around the country. Her research began a definitive move in composition theory to establish writing as a process of thinking specific to each discipline.

Russell, Fulwiler, and Emig are just a few of the compositionists whose research has laid the groundwork upon which WAC has been built. Many others who follow these three continue to call for writing to be included across the curriculum because of its ability to provide the necessary bridge from functional to critical literacy. Each theorist supports the contention that critical literacy is a fundamental avenue through which individuals achieve success in their chosen fields by being able to question texts, develop original thinking, and problem solve. The

research that Emig calls for at the conclusion of her article has taken place. This research, coupled with the fact that many students depend on the academy to teach them the skills of critical literacy should lead to writing being included across the curriculum.

#### THE ROLE OF GENRE CONVENTIONS IN CRITICAL LITERACY

Many theorists in more than one field of study have linked writing to cognition. This study focuses on how genre conventions in writing impact on critical literacy both in the classroom and the workplace. Whether or not individuals achieve success in the field of business often is tied to their abilities to question texts, develop original thinking, and problem solve. Many students depend on the academy to teach them these skills of literacy within their particular field. In an effort to determine whether or not the writing included in business classrooms provides the opportunity to practice critical thinking, a closer analysis of genre and its impact on literacy will be undertaken. In addition, for this study in particular, business literacy, its functions, and its consequences, will also be analyzed.

Mary Kalantzis and Bill Cope support Janet Emig's contention that "writing through its inherent reinforcing cycle involving hand, eye, and brain marks a uniquely

powerful multi-representational mode for learning" (Villanueva). Kalantzis and Cope call for teachers to understand the impact the teaching of genres can have on students when they write: "When it comes to teaching 'Western culture,' the progressivists are right about the arcane classicism of traditional curriculum and its cultural arrogance and blindspots. But progressivism does students a disservice if it does not help them know the hows and whys of the dominant culture . . ." (62). This statement points to the need for students to know the "hows and whys" of discourse within their particular field to become critical thinkers.

Cope and Kalantzis continue to discuss the importance of genre literacy in our society:

Literacy means more than simply phonics and orthography. It is the mastery of a range of genres, which use very different social purposes. For this reason literacy remains crucially important; and illiteracy should never be underestimated. We live in a society in which many people are truly illiterate in a social sense that goes well beyond being able to hear sounds in the words on the printed page and scribe the sounds of speech. If our society is moving towards orality, then this is at the expense of peculiarly literate ways of knowing the world, and this in itself is a cause for concern (74).

The authors define critical literacy as a skill that moves beyond simply understanding the written word or the ability to write on paper. They call for pedagogy that empowers

the student to "know" the world through literacy. If critical literacy is of great importance to an individual's ability to negotiate in the world, it seems logical to assume that classrooms would include assignments that introduce genres necessary to that field.

Cope and Kalantzis state, "Genres are learnt by some form of **copying**. . . . [they] are conventional structures which have evolved as pragmatic schemes for making certain types of meaning and to achieve distinctive social goals, in specific settings, by particular linguistic means" (67). Thus, if learning a particular set of genres within a field of study leads to "certain types of meaning," and "distinctive social goals," then, within the College of Business, it could be inferred that business genres and the accompanying metacognition would be taught.

As Cope and Kalantzis suggest, "It follows that literacy teaching, if it is to provide students with equitable social access, needs to link the different social purposes of language in different contexts to predictable patterns of discourse. These patterns of discourse and their genre variations give access to different degrees and kinds of social power" (67). In other words, for individuals to gain social and economic power, it is mandatory that pedagogy include the purposes and patterns

of discourse within their chosen field, particularly those forms involving writing.

Linda Flower problematizes these definitions of literacy as she writes:

the image of literacy emerging out of the new social cognitive conversation starts with an event that is at once public and personal. . . .an attempt to create meaning,. . .shaped by . . .literate, social, and cultural practices that existed long before the writer. . . .literacy is also a personal, intentional action, an attempt to understand, express, explore, communicate, or influence (9).

Here, Flower looks at many ways established genres work to further public and personal goals of the writer by shaping meaning. She continues to emphasize the importance of literacy in writing as she states:

In our technological society, the demand for literacy goes beyond the receptive capacities of reading to the productive literacies of writing. The National Assessment of Educational Progress view of the workplace calls for a written literacy that does not simply reproduce information but that transforms it: 'Skills in reducing data, interpreting it, packaging it effectively, documenting decisions, explaining complex matter in simple terms, and persuading are highly prized in business, education, and the military and will become more so as the information explosion continues. . . . (10-11)

Flower believes the teaching of writing is the way to negotiate a pedagogy that includes the understanding of a genre's conventions to allow for accomplishing the growing need to reinvent ideas and information. Genre learning

involves metacognition. It means students gain an understanding of what readers are likely to expect in certain rhetorical situations and it means students learn various strategies for achieving their purpose with readers in those situations. One of the fields she lists as being most impacted by this need is business—the focus of this study.

Flower's concern is echoed by Lisa Delpit as she looks at this issue from a different vantage point, correlating the need for educating all children in "power skills" in order for them to succeed in the culture of dominance, particularly if they are not members of that culture from birth. Delpit writes:

if schooling prepares people for jobs, and the kind of job a person has determines her or his economic status and, therefore, power, then schooling is intimately related to that power. . . . This means that success in institutions—schools, workplaces, and so on—is predicated upon acquisition of the culture of those who are in power (Villanueva 568).

Delpit realizes that to succeed outside the academic environment, one must acquire the "culture of power." Although Delpit is discussing the marginalization of minority voices, her theory can be readily transferred to include the need for graduating students who have been explicitly exposed to the "culture of power" inherent in their field of study.

Delpit contends that those who are already "members of [a] culture transmit information implicitly to co-members," thereby excluding any non-members consciously or subconsciously (Villanueva 569). She calls for direct, explicit instruction of the "power forms" for all individuals who wish to enter into the discourse of a particular community.

Further support for the necessity of teaching students the valued "power forms" of their field is discussed Carol Berkenkotter and Thomas N. Huckin. They write:

Written communication functions within disciplinary cultures to facilitate the multiple social interactions that are instrumental in the production of knowledge. . . .maintaining the production of knowledge is crucial for institutional recognition,. . . .[and] also the criteria by which careers are assessed, tenure given, and grants awarded. . . .Genres are intimately linked to a discipline's methodology, and they package information in ways that conform to a discipline's norms, values, and ideology. Understanding the genres of written communication in one's field is, therefore, essential to professional success (emphasis added 4).

Berkenkotter and Huckin understand the importance of learning the genres of writing and communicating within one's chosen field. The web created within a specific field of study inherently interconnects all aspects of that discipline at that moment in time. It reflects what that community sees as important and relevant. If students are not provided the opportunity to learn these discourse



conventions and their rhetorical purposes while attending school, they will be at a disadvantage once they have left the academic environment.

It is also important that individuals be capable of recognizing not only the genres themselves but also be capable of developing a critical self-awareness of the genres' usage. Without this metacognitive step, the writer does not appropriate the genre; the genre appropriates the writer. Pedagogy must then incorporate not only the copying of the genres, but the understanding of the impact purpose, audience, and technique has on the writer's decisions to make meaning through particular forms.

These theorists agree that writing is a vital factor in learning, and they also believe in the necessity of teaching the "power forms" of a field of study through writing in the academic situation. The importance of writing in teaching critical literacy has been thoroughly researched and documented within English Composition Studies. But, before this study can analyze whether or not the teaching of critical literacy takes place in upper-level business classrooms, an examination of how researchers in the field of business perceive the importance of writing must be undertaken.

## WRITING IN THE FIELD OF BUSINESS

The field of business views the role of writing as an integral factor in evaluating employees, maintaining relationships, and communicating company information. Performance appraisals and promotions are often linked to an individual's ability to communicate properly and correctly. In business, success can be linked to one's ability to critically understand the how and why of genre usage as well as the when and what.

An example of the research being done regarding the need for good communication skills within the field of business can be seen in the research by Kathleen M. Hiemstra, et.al. These authors try to determine where the responsibility of educating written communication skills lay—at the academy or within the organization. They cite H. Lon Addams as suggesting that "CPA firms should provide first-year staff with training" in the areas of communication (5). Addams' study examines "the effects of written communication skills on the performance appraisals of first-year accountants in CPA firms, [and] the importance of written communication during their first year in maintaining successful client and company personnel relationships" (5). Addams' "respondents indicated that 'the most difficult communication tasks identified by

first-year accountants in CPA firms were those that required making oral presentations and writing reports, letters, and memos'" (5). If Addams' respondents apply to most business graduates, the role the academy has played in teaching effective communication skills to these first-year employees must be analyzed.

Hiemstra, et.al. look to Steven Golen to suggest that "communication skills should be taught within the accounting curriculum [because] . . .skills in writing, speaking, meeting, and interacting . . .are considered heavily in job continuation and promotion" (5). Golen further calls for "business communication faculty [to] offer assistance to accounting faculty regarding the implementation of communications in the accounting program, and/or offer communications courses exclusively for accounting majors" (5). Golen demands WAC courses be implemented at the university to teach graduating students the importance communication is to securing a job as well as keeping a job.

The study continues by acknowledging that of the 78 percent of respondents who received formal (academic) communication training

more than 59 percent. . .indicated . . .that the work they completed in communication skills at the undergraduate level did not adequately prepare them to communicate as a business

professional. Fewer than 19 percent . . . indicate[d] that their undergraduate education had provided them quite adequately with the communication skills and training to function successfully as a business professional (emphasis added 8).

Although the statistics cited are cause for concern, the most telling comments come from the employees surveyed.

They state:

The best idea poorly communicated will never fly. Good communication skills are absolutely necessary for even average performance.

The people who seem to advance to high levels of success in the business world aren't necessarily any smarter—they are just better communicators.

Communication and interpersonal skills are critical factors to career success. In the accounting and financial area, it is extremely important to communicate technical matters in nontechnical terms to nonfinancial people.

College should prepare students to express themselves orally and in writing in a manner understandable to hearers and readers. Without downgrading the importance of technical knowledge of accounting, a person cannot be an adequate professional public or management accountant, even at the junior level, unless he or she can communicate with other people, either individually or in groups. . . . (8-9).

No more telling evidence can be found than the words of business employees speaking to the need for the academy to include writing in all classrooms—especially those situated in the College of Business—to teach students the conventions of their fields of study. Communicative skills are necessary for job continuation and success.

This study is undertaken in an attempt to determine what steps are taken in upper-level business classes to include the teaching of genres specific to business. It will examine what impact the inclusion or exclusion of genre has on student literacy. It also compares these classroom pedagogies to the functions of written literacy in the workplace through the views of three professional women. The results of this study should discover intersections between the writing taking place in the academic business classroom and the writing tasks performed by the three women. Finally, it offers suggested pedagogy that incorporates critical literacy

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE ORIGIN OF THE STUDY

This chapter is a study of the business writing lives of three professional women and focuses on the ways writing functions in the workplace for them. They discuss the types of writing utilized in their professions, how they approach the writing process, and how the companies that employ them view writing. This will set the parameters for comparison with observational findings of the business classrooms in chapter three.

Once the women had agreed to participate in this study providing they remain anonymous, they then collected samples of writing they utilized on-the-job and answered the questions listed below to help me understand the writing process they used. The questions are:

1. What roles do you see for writing in your profession? (transaction of business, conveying information, helping solve problems, etc?)
2. How does writing function in your work experience? (does your company value writing, use it in performance evaluations, is it used to discover ideas, problem solve, something else?)
3. What do you and your company perceive are characteristics of good, effective writing?

4. What percent of your time is spent writing? What percent to the whole does each different type of writing contribute?
5. Think about a recent writing project (could be a memo, letter, email, etc.). Take some time and describe the project. Identify the format, purpose, audience, and any other information you deem important—such as content.
6. After you have described the project, reflect on how your intended audience might affect how long you spend planning, drafting, revising, and editing the writing. For example, I assume that for communication within your company, the amount of time spent on the various stages of writing (listed above) might be altered depending on the recipient's status in the company's hierarchy.
7. Communication outside your company (or even within it) might be approached in a completely different manner depending on the purpose of the document(s). For example, you might approach conveying negative information in a different manner than positive information.

The answers from the respondents indicate that each of them understands the importance of metacognition and genre knowledge for success in the workplace.

#### THE BUSINESS PARTICIPANTS

Each of these women agreed to participate in the study providing their identity and the identity of their corporate employers remains anonymous. In compliance with their wishes, all information relating to specific names and organizations has been deleted.

The first woman contributing to my research is an Assistant Vice President for a commercial bank. Her name is "L," and she is responsible for generating \$20 million dollars in commercial and small business real estate loans each year. "L" has been in her current position for six months and in the lending industry for 20 years.

The second contributing professional is "S," an account executive with an annual dollar volume of \$20 million. She works for a large, well-known, consumer product manufacturer and is responsible for sales in two regional grocery retailers and one distributor. She has developed her career over a 21-year period, beginning as a speech pathologist in public schools and spending the last 14 years in sales. She holds an MA in Speech Pathology from the University of Iowa.



"C" is the third business professional to participate in the study. She is a college graduate from California State University, Fullerton, with a BA in Journalism. She began her career writing for a local business magazine, then spent several years writing and editing programs and marketing materials for a performing arts group. For the last three years, "C" has worked for one of the largest distributors of computer technology products and services in the world. For her latest employer, "C" began as a senior copywriter but has been promoted twice and currently holds the position of editorial project manager. She has "written and edited brochures, newsletters and catalogs, all designed to sell products and services... .She has overseen the production of these projects from concept to print. She is currently contributing to the redesign of the company's Web site. . .where she'll [be] Internet editor."

Each of these women is a valuable contributor to her corporation, and each views writing as vitally important to her success. However, they are not equally comfortable with producing the written word.

#### HOW WRITING FUNCTIONS FOR THESE PROFESSIONALS

None of these women are familiar with Janet Emig's research, but as their responses will show, they understand

that "Writing is learned behavior . . .writing is slower than most talking . . .[and] Writing usually results in a visible graphic product; talking does not" (Villanueva 9-10). These women take great care and invest quite a bit of time when planning, developing, and presenting a written product. They consider purpose and audience to be particularly important aspects of their writing processes.

The three women's responses to the questions exhibit similarities in the purposes writing serves in their fields as well as genres utilized. Their replies also reflect differences as to audience and content. An analysis of their responses will help define the role writing plays in each of their respective career fields.

"L's" response indicates a level of discomfort in her writing that has increased since she joined her new employer six months ago. She writes, "I have never felt comfortable in my writing skills and because of this I am often re-writing and reviewing summaries and letters I send. At my previous places of employment writing was never a big role. . . .My employment at . . .has really pushed me to work on my writing skills." Her uneasiness is apparent. Many times, she shared with me how she constantly revised her responses to my questions and considers herself not "good" at writing. With her previous

employers, who she considers less prestigious than her current employer, "L" handled her loan information verbally, handing over the job of writing up the loan data to a processor. While this allowed her to feel more at

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of her loans the bank funds supplement her annual salary.

Her ability to critically analyze each loan, decide its

merits, select what to share with her loan committee, and

select how to present her findings indicates a great amount

of cognitive planning and revising. "L's" discomfort might

originate in her need to learn a new way to approach a familiar genre. This new company requires a great deal more genre knowledge and metacognition than her previous employers did.

"S's" response to writing's role offers a more detailed look into how customers receive information via writing. She describes how 20% of her writing includes communication with her customers that "consists of transaction of business, clarity of information, providing information on the record and presentations which [provide] benefits and features of new items and programs." Written communication with her customers is an attempt to capture a record of what she (and through her, her company) can provide. It also serves as a "record" for her and her customers as to the details of the transactions.

In her writing process, "S" has become very familiar with the expectations of her customers and her company. Her 14 years on-the-job have given her a sense of comfort in her writing. But, she still invests a good deal of time making sure she determines the exact purpose of her writing and who will receive her final product.

"C's" response lends a different perspective to the role of writing in the business field when she writes, "Marketing is probably secondary only to sales in the

company in terms of importance, and sending the right message in brochures, newsletters and catalogs is crucial. Usually we're writing to sell a service or product, or inspire interest in an upcoming event." For her company, writing in the form of brochures, catalogs or newsletters is the product being sold. This is different than writing for "S" which is used to transmit information to customers about a product or program. And, it is dissimilar to "L's" writing that is used to sell a product (a loan) to her company. Writing in each of these business situations is used to convey information, but in each case the writer's purpose and audience differs. As Cope and Kalantzis have suggested, each of these women uses a "pragmatic scheme" to make meaning and achieve her goals through the linguistic means available to her. Each makes different meaning and achieves different goals.

As to the question of the approximate percentage of time spent writing as well as the percent each type of writing contributes to the whole, the answers were as follows. Of "C's" writing, 50% is spent on the maintenance of projects; 45% is devoted to marketing copy; and 5% is invested in the upkeep of company information. "L" writes 75% of her time all geared toward negotiating the funding of loans between her bank and her mortgage brokers. Of the

three, "S" spends the least amount of time writing dedicating only 50% of her work hours to this activity. As stated earlier, her writing consists of intra-company e-mails and direct promotional correspondence with her customers. By looking at the amount of time each of these women spends writing, one can conclude how important it is to be able to make meaning and achieve goals through the appropriate genre for success in the workplace.

Another recurring theme in the three women's responses centers on the use of the Internet to convey information to the company and to customers, and to receive information from the company and customers. Never being required to use E-mail at her previous employers, "L" is just now beginning to utilize this mode of writing. She writes, "I can tell you that E-mail is used to convey messages and concerns regarding day to day work. I do know most upper management does prefer to receive E-mail and or faxes in response to loans in process." Her company finds this avenue of communication advantageous over phone calls and views writing in the form of E-mail "helps keep work in process and at the same time keeps a record of events and the order that they happened." "L's" company appreciates the efficiency of E-mail and its popularity is growing in the world of business.

In the past five years, E-mail has become a major influence in "S's" company's communication practices. As "S" relates, writing in her profession consists of 80% intra-company communication with 60% being conducted among her peers and 20% with her headquarters' support and resource personnel. She views the E-mail format as an avenue to "share information, solve problems, [and] provide clarity" conveniently. This format allows her and her fellow employees to communicate with "several people in one message." Before the introduction of this type of communicative efficiency, field sales employees received information either by voicemail or regular mail prohibiting the near instantaneous conveying of important information to customers.

E-mail can have both positive and negative effects on the recipients. As "C" reports, "writing is one of the primary methods to relay company news, mostly through E-mail. (In fact, our recent layoffs were first announced this way!) Since . . . is such a large company (14,000 or so worldwide employees), E-mail is the most efficient way to reach them, especially if the recipient is in a distant location." The content of the message is secondary to the effective and efficient manner in which E-mail conveys information. For all three professionals, writing E-mail

has become the major avenue of conveying information regardless of their audience, purpose, or content. This medium also requires that the women invest time and energy planning, revising, and presenting the information they wish to convey, and audience particularly impacts E-mail. "S" relates that she spends less time in her writing process when communicating via the Internet to her peers, and she plans and revises quite a bit more when her message is directed to her upper management or her customers.

Further acknowledgment of writing's importance in their everyday business can be found in their agreement that writing is highly valued by each of their companies. "L" implicitly acknowledges the importance of writing in her new company through her continuing attempts to eliminate her discomfort by practicing her writing. "S" and "C" offer explicit examples of writing's importance for their companies.

"S" reports that effective writing is so important at her company that it offers three training courses on writing entitled: Grammar and Punctuation, Writing #1, and Writing #2. The goals of each class are clearly identified by the company. Grammar and Punctuation instructs you in how to "Write grammatically correct sentences. Use punctuation appropriately . . .[and] Improve your spelling,



diction and proofreading skills." Since this corporation requires every field sales employee to have completed either a BA or BS degree, it is interesting to note that they still feel a course such as this should be offered. This course also supports Linda Flower's perception in chapter one that many people tend to believe that teaching "correctness" helps teach literacy.

Writing #1 teaches you to "Organize your ideas and data so readers can easily understand and recognize their importance. Structure paragraphs logically and persuasively. Design communications that are inviting to read. Proofread for content, style and mechanics." This class appears to focus more on the genre conventions of business writing and less on the need to develop cognition. However, it does appear similar to some of the requirements found in first-year university composition classes and can be seen as a first step in teaching literacy.

The final class offered by "S's" employer in the training of writing teaches the ability to "Clearly organize complex information in a logical and persuasive format effectively using charts, tables and graphs. Analyze the special needs of your audience. Coach others to write more effectively." This class is the culmination of the employer's training in the writing process. By

beginning with basic skills and adding genre requirements, the three courses build toward critical literacy and the ability to transfer knowledge to others. By designing the writing classes in three sessions over a period of time, the company recognizes that writing is a complex, learned process.

Both "C" and her company value writing as an essential employee tool. She states:

I use it [writing] daily to solve problems, convey issues and receive or give confirmations related to a particular marketing project. I consider writing to be the most important way to communicate because the conversation is documented in detail. With as many projects as I work on, it's easy for anyone to forget what was said in a meeting, so I rely on my notes—handwritten or E-mail—to tell me how I should proceed with a project.

The written document is also legally binding. We use it for internal and external contracts to sell ads. Also, the written contract determines the specifications of a marketing project: size, scope, color, type of paper it's printed on, where an ad is inserted, how much money it will cost, when a brochure will be printed and delivered.

[Company] executives place a great value on writing for the above reasons. Also, they go to great lengths to ensure the marketing department has the resources it needs to communicate the company messages: computer systems, software, elaborate ergonomic workstations, [and] access to restricted industry research via the Internet.

Although "S" and "C" differ in their use of writing, each finds it a valuable and essential tool of communication.

Each of the companies values writing as seen in the amount of time and money invested in employee training and in establishing a productive working environment.

From the perspective of these three professionals, one of the most important characteristics of good effective writing is the idea of audience. For each of these women, their writing must be clear, concise, grammatically correct, well-organized, and give the targeted audience a clear picture. Since these women rely on their audience to purchase, accept, or support what their writing discusses, how they present their case in writing is very important to their success.

For "L," writing must include all the necessary information on a piece of property for which she is attempting to attain lending. She must accurately and minutely communicate in her writing all the details and conditions of the property as well as the cash flow and credit history of the prospective buyer. As she points out, "When pieces are left out and not explained in detail it may leave doubt in the mind of the [loan] committee members to conclude something that may be unfavorable to the borrower's loan request" thereby slowing down the funding process or rejecting the loan altogether. "L" must decide what information to include, how to organize it, and

when it is in the appropriate form to present it to her committee. This process reflects a great deal of self-awareness on "L's" part to realize how her meaning, her goal, and her audience are situated to each other in a given situation.

In "S's" case, when her audience is her customer, her writing becomes a presentation and confirmation sheet detailing the discounted prices and allowances offered by her company on specific products for a specific period. In this instance, her writing, like "C's," becomes a written contract between her and her buyers regarding a specific promotional product and period. "C" is responsible for reading the information from her company, synthesizing the appropriate pieces to share with each customer, and presenting the selected data in a way that encourages purchase by the customer. Like "L," "S" must be capable of realizing the relationship between all facets of her metacognitive process as well.

For "C", her marketing copy must reflect clear and concise writing and contain new and innovative ways to present "familiar and sometimes mundane ideas . . . [that] address the correct audience and grab their attention." In this capacity, "C" enters into the social construction of her pragmatic scheme and modifies it to fit her goal for

each writing situation. This is the type of critical literacy most cherished by Linda Flower in chapter one where genre knowledge allows the writer to impact on the conventions of a genre.

"C" introduces another trait of her writing not reflected by the other two women. She writes, "Sometimes we must write about delicate issues, such as discontinuing service or migrating resellers to a new process of doing business with us. These require writing with sensitivity and even more attention to detail than normal to keep the resellers as happy as possible." In this situation, "C" recognizes how important her awareness of purpose and audience is to the achievement of her goal.

In each case, the professional writers use their writing skills to gain a competitive edge in their business dealings. Writing becomes a major implement for success and achievement, and none of these professionals takes it lightly.

#### SAMPLE WRITING PROCESS

Each of the women's responses to the final three prompts indicates the importance of knowing your audience when writing in business situations. The most detailed response came from "C" who discusses the quarterly publication she edits. Although she overviews the

contributing writers and their copy, she does not have to write a lot herself. One of her biggest challenges concerns her audience. She writes:

We write for almost two audiences, because the catalog is designed for. . .resellers to pass on to their end users. . .so we have to keep everyone in mind when writing. We don't have much information about our audience except for the random feedback we get, and our budget won't allow us to conduct any surveys or focus groups. . . . So, we don't truly know who we're writing for, . . .[making] our task of providing interesting and relevant information in the articles a little difficult.

"C" continues by explaining how she assumes the traits of her audience and their "savvy" in computer technology. Her inability to clearly identify her audience causes her to "vary [the articles'] technical sophistication to hopefully address all kinds of possible readers." The duality of her audience coupled with the limited knowledge available causes "C" to spend "more time on this publication than any other. . . .[making] the research and writing more time-consuming and in-depth" than other publications with just one targeted readership. "C" implicitly acknowledges how important audience awareness is to her ability to produce an effective written product.

The total time spent on this publication is enormous.

"C" begins her process "four months in advance of the publication date" conducting research and determining the

topics she will feature. After selecting these topics, she "writes one-paragraph descriptions of each to sell the ideas to [her] supervisor and senior vice president." The method continues as she explains the detailed step-by-step process that accompanies the publication of this quarterly printing—a method that depicts how integrated and complex business writing can be. She writes:

Upon approval, the descriptions are sent to the sales team to help them sell ads. This research and approval process takes about two weeks, but the writing takes about two hours. But the writing is just as important as the research—if [she] can't sell people on the idea with a compelling description, even though [she's] done exhaustive research, [she'd] be shooting [herself] in the foot.

The feature writers will also spend one week researching and one week writing. [She] takes about 8 hours to edit the first stage; more if one of the stories doesn't hit the mark through the idea, instructions, or in addressing the audience. The writers will spend anywhere from one to 16 hours incorporating [her] edits, then providing [her] a second draft for review. This takes less time than the first—probably about four to six hours. The writers make [her] final changes, then the copy goes to the copy editor for fine-tuning (four hours). After the writers make those changes, the senior editor reviews the copy, makes more changes and returns it to the writers, who make the senior editor's changes, then send it to the production artist. This is where the [writers'] contribution ends.

While the feature articles writers may be finished, "C" is not. As her process continues, she describes how the editors continue to write and/or edit "product spotlights

(24-48 hours depending on how many spotlights have been sold and in what condition they're in when they arrive)."

She then edits the spotlights—a step that usually takes about eight hours—and forwards the advertising spotlights to the manufacturers who have purchased them for approval.

"C" makes any changes requested by the manufacturers upon their return and then forwards them to a production artist for inclusion in the publication's layout. The final step consists of final copy approval. Then, "C" spends

another few hours (two to three) writing the table of contents and cover headlines. Once all copy is [laid] out in the design process, [she spends] up to 16 more hours tweaking all the copy (spotlights and features), often cutting to fit the space or editing for anything [she's] missed.

"C's" process for publication indicates the depth of steps inherent in effective business writing. While most academic writing assignments are not this complex or detailed, "C's" publication exhibits three traits often necessary for success in business communication: collaboration, research, and time in developing the written product. The degree of collaboration necessary to achieve a company goal can be tremendous. But, it differs from the collaboration found in academic classrooms because inherent in corporate collaboration is a hierarchical order. The lack of hierarchical order, other than the teacher, in



classroom collaboration proves to be a site of contention in the collaborative efforts of students in chapter three. The amount of time invested in researching and developing this written publication exceeds any available time to produce similar projects in the academic environment. But, it does point to the fact that collaboration, research, and large investments of time are necessary to produce effective writing in the workplace.

The responses of these three professionals support the results of the research discussed in chapter one that links writing to cognition and literacy. Written communication is directly tied to success in the workplace, and it is reasonable to assume that these types of written genres are being taught in the classrooms of the university. In addition, the types of writing processes these women undertake in the business world indicate their knowledge of genre conventions and their ability to think metacognitively in any situation. As the sample writing process has shown, collaboration, research, and time-intensive writing assignments needs to be included in the business classrooms. Chapter three will describe what types of writing take place in three upper division, business management classrooms to determine if writing assignments included in these classes intersect with the

genres and purposes used by these women in the business world.

### CHAPTER THREE

This chapter focuses on knowledge gained through ethnographic research conducted over a seven-week period. The research includes on-site observations, interviews, and artifacts. This chapter is devoted to the first two elements.

In chapter two, the respondents discussed how writing functions in their workplaces. Their writing processes focused on purpose and audience, and they displayed the ability to think critically in a variety of rhetorical situations. The women exhibited the ability to use genre conventions via pragmatic schemes to attain goals in specific situations.

Following the description of each site, the first part of this chapter will focus on how specific writing assignments in three business classrooms reflect similarities with the genres and metacognition displayed by the women in chapter two. The second half will discuss how the collaboration in the classrooms differs with those experienced by the women.

#### WHERE THE ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH TOOK PLACE

The research was conducted in three upper division level business management classrooms at a state university in Southern California. The seven-week period occurred

during the winter quarter of 1999.

Site #1 was an "Expository Writing for Administration" class described in the university catalog as:

Writing related to business and public administration including documented research reports, summaries and analytical papers. Revision and rewriting will be required. Course fulfills the graduation requirement in writing proficiency. May not be counted for fulfilling concentration requirements for any degree program offered by the School of Business and Public Administration. No more than one of the expository writing courses (Education 306, English 306, Social Sciences 306, Management 306, Natural Sciences 306, Social Sciences 306) may be taken for credit. Students who have received a grade of no credit in any combination of the expository writing courses two or more times must meet with the 306 coordinator or designee to design a developmental writing plan as a condition for enrolling for a third quarter. All students must obtain junior status at the time of registration or their course request will be cancelled. Formerly Management 495. Graded A, B, C/no credit. *Prerequisites: English 101 and a minimum of 90 quarter (60 semester) units of college credit. (4 units)*

The importance of this course is apparent in its description. It is an upper-division writing proficiency requirement that must be fulfilled to receive an undergraduate degree from the university. It does vary from other 306 class descriptions in that it states the writing will focus on issues related to the business and public administration fields. According to the catalog, the writing is expected to include research, summary, and analytical papers. This class met on Monday and Wednesday

afternoons from 2:00p.m. to 3:50p.m. and had an enrollment of 31 students--15 females and 16 males. The instructor was female with an MA who is referred to in the catalog as a Lecturer in Management.

Site #2 was an upper division course entitled "Management and Organizational Behavior." The catalog describes this class as an

Introduction to management as it affects operations and the behavior of people in relation to the functional fields of administration. Selected behavioral concepts analyzed with respect to application in management. (Also offered as Psychology 302. Students may not receive credit for both.) (4 units)

This class is for undergraduates seeking a variety of degrees in business. It serves as a prerequisite for other classes. The instructor was a female with a Ph.D. and is listed as an Associate Professor of Management in the catalog. The class met on Mondays and Wednesdays from 4:00p.m. to 5:50p.m. with an enrollment of 58 students. The introductory nature of the class is responsible for the large number of students enrolled.

Site #3 was an upper division course called "Organization and Management Theory." It is described in the catalog as a course relating to

Development and analysis of organization and management theory. Comparative analysis seeking patterns and systematic explanation of differences among organizations. Dynamics of

interaction between organizations and environment. *Prerequisite: Management 302 or Psychology 302.* (4 units)

This course is designed for seniors who are pursuing degrees in business. The instructor was male with a Ph.D. and the title of Associate Professor of Management. The class met on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:00p.m. to 3:50p.m. The enrollment consisted of 25 students.

#### HOW WRITING TASKS TAUGHT GENRE CONVENTIONS:

##### OBSERVATIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS

In chapter one of this study, many theorists were cited to establish the importance of writing in learning. In addition, the ability to use genre conventions and to think metacognitively has been linked to success in the workplace in chapter two. In this section of the study, I will focus on the writing assignments included in the three observational sites to determine if the types of writing used by the three business professionals discussed in chapter two can be found.

The syllabus for site #1 calls for six major writing assignments. These are:

1. Respect Essay—discussing the definition, importance, and ability to earn and show respect to the student writer.

2. Interest Essay—a 1-2 page essay on any one interest other than school or work explaining why it is interesting to you.
3. Article Summary—find, photocopy and read a magazine or journal article related to the one interest in essay #2. Summarize only the author's ideas found in the article. Personal opinions, ideas, evaluations, or critique is not allowed.
4. 2 Reviews Essay—Find and collect the bibliographical information on a book related to the interest in essay #2. Then find two reviews of the book and write a comparative analysis of the two reviews.
5. Common Essay—Midterm exam centering on two business letters.
6. Portfolio—This project was the culminating project and contained all papers completed for the class.

At first glance, these six writing assignments appear to be less business-driven and more concerned with the writing requirements students find in their English classes. In fact, that is exactly what two students, "T" and "M," perceived when asked to discuss the essays. When asked about the course, "T" replied that "the work we did in there [site #1], I think is a little obsolete. We need to

have more business writing instead of the other stuff that we were doing." When prompted for a more specific response, "T" continued by saying, "It was more like English 101 work instead of business writing... .we wrote letters and stuff like that, but it wasn't—it was the format of business writing, but it would have been better for me if we were writing about business." From his response, it is apparent that "T" could see the formats often used in business situations, but could not relate what he was doing to a rhetorical situation related to business.

"M" agreed with "T" in his opinion of the site's writing assignments. He says:

when I took the class, I was thinking . . . it was going to be more concentrated on . . . resumes and actual writing types that you'd use in the business field . . . it was kind of a review of what I learned three years ago in [English] 101 cause all the stuff [the teacher] talks about I already heard before.

Both students appear to object to the lack of genre knowledge in the essay assignments rather than the format. Yet, each seems to believe that the assignments helped them improve their writing skills. "T" expresses both a positive and negative reaction to the assignments because he sees that writing has helped him improve "a little bit on my writing skills, but it didn't improve on my business



writing skills." "T" does not recognize any part of the writing produced for this class as business related.

"M" views the same problems with the writing assignments as he states he "really didn't learn a whole lot from the class, what it did was basically kind of polish my skills—I guess in that sense I did learn about polishing my writing." Both students recognized how practicing writing has value, but each expressed a desire to see assignments that focused on business genres. "T" expressed it best when he said, "practice does make perfect with writing . . . the more you write, the better you get." This student had not written since his first year at the university in his Freshman Composition class and, consequently, he sees the writing assignments as a way to polish the writing skills he had not used since then. This situation speaks to the need to include writing in all disciplines and all classrooms. As we have seen in the previous chapter, both employees and employers recognize how learning the process of writing is long and complicated. These six writing assignments do ask the students to make rhetorical decisions to specific situations, but the assignments lack the other half of building critical literacy-genre knowledge.

The final requirement for the class was a portfolio. The instructor required a cover letter to summarize the accompanying documents. This letter can be seen as a business format, but the way the assignment was discussed by the instructor prohibited any metacognitive activities for the students. In this instance, the teacher presented the conventions of this particular business genre, but she failed to fully explain how these would shift based on understanding the situation. Because of this, the assignment gave the students the genre conventions but failed to provide a problem that would develop the critical thinking necessary to use it properly when faced with different situations. It might have been more beneficial to the students if the instructor explicitly taught the genre conventions and then made the assignment part of a business problem that each student had to solve on his/her own as seen in chapter four.

The six assignments in this class did not relate to the rhetorical situations experienced by the three women in chapter two. The purpose remained the same throughout the quarter—to receive a good grade, and the audience never changed; it remained the teacher. The teacher was attempting to instruct the students in the writing process but failed to relate her pedagogy to the types of

situations that would call for specific business genre knowledge. Nor did her pedagogy allow the students opportunities to struggle with the decision-making and critical thinking used by the three professionals in chapter two. The pedagogy included assignments designed to express personal opinions on an interest and this resulted in the two students feeling that the course was more like their English Composition courses rather than being related to Business.

On many occasions, I observed the teacher lecture about the importance of business conventions. During these observations, the students generally paid no attention and took no notes. For some reason, the students did not respond to the information being given by the teacher. I believe their non-responsiveness centered on the lack of detailed instructions in some projects (such as group work) as well as the overuse of Composition terms when given detailed instructions on written essay assignments. Although the amount of writing assignments included in this site exceeded those in site #2 or site #3, the two other sites did explicitly discuss genre conventions and allow for metacognitive activities.

Later in this chapter we will see how the collaboration included in site #2 reflects both the team

approach often found in the business world as well as the writing of summaries, analysis, and effective reasoning necessary to "sell" solutions. The writing assignment attached to the collaborative effort in this site was the only major element in the class focused on the writing process. Other functions of writing included note-taking by the students during lectures and the definitions and short responses included as part of an examination process that consisted mostly of multiple-choice questions. With the exception of the written element of the collaborative project, writing in this site functioned in two ways: recording for future assessment and assessment itself.

The writing expectations in the collaborative project included several summaries, analysis, and, according to the handout, "the most important part!"- the ability to effectively defend decisions made by the group. The following excerpt from the handout asserts repeatedly the need to argue and reason effectively:

The grade for the written analysis will be based primarily on your group's reasoning for each decision. The grade for the written analysis will be based primarily on your group's reasoning for each decision. The grade for the written analysis will be based primarily on your group's reasoning for each decision. The grade for the written analysis will be based primarily on your group's reasoning for each decision. The grade for the written analysis will be based primarily on your group's reasoning for each decision.

It becomes apparent after reading the second sentence in the above excerpt that the ability to effectively present the group's cognitive decision making process for each step of their solution is of paramount importance. The ability to defend one's conclusions mirrors many business situations where ideas and solutions to problems have to be "sold" to superiors or colleagues. This site's pedagogy, however, did not include instruction in how to reason or think critically about each decision made. Future pedagogy should include this vitally important element.

The importance of being able to problem solve and then present solutions to a large audience (in this case, the class and instructor) is indicated by the time and effort put forth in the construction of this handout. The written piece of this project functions as a record of the thought processes of the group and, as such, is vitally important to the group. While the instructor feels the written product in this collaboration is of equal importance to the oral presentation (each comprises 50% of the grade), it is interesting to note how "T" and "M" who participated in this class as well as site #1 felt about the experience.

"T" could not see the need for further writing assignments in site #2, but "M" felt that more writing would have helped him "digest" the material. He says:

I guess there's some material she [teacher in site #2] could have us do a paper on. It would probably help the understanding if she had us write. Cause there's some pretty big topics . . . as far as dealing with people and organizational behavior . . . . I'm sure if she had assigned a paper . . . it would probably help the understanding because some of it's pretty complex.

"M" understands how writing on complex topics helps him break down the knowledge into forms he can synthesize and "own." Further realization of how writing functions for him comes in his response to the question of whether or not he sees any connection between writing and learning. "M" responded that

So far in my business classes, no I haven't because I haven't had a business class to date where I've had to write a paper . . . . But, yeah, overall I'd say that when . . . you do a paper or project on a certain specific subject you do learn a lot more about that because you're researching and finding out for yourself, and you have to take what you learn and put it into your own words. In a sense, that's like teaching, and they say the best way to learn is to teach it.

"M" articulates how including writing across the curriculum benefits students. He acknowledges that discovering the knowledge and reforming it in his own words helps him possess the learning. His words reinforce the theories that link writing to cognition and supports the goal of including writing in all classes regardless of the discipline or the class size. His words also emphasize how

assignments that call for metacognition help him retain the genre knowledge for use in future situations.

The writing assignment included in site #2 calling for solid reasoning and effective argument resonates "C's" claim in chapter two that without effective writing in support of her decision making process on the quarterly publication, she would waste her exhaustive research. In this case, the assignment mirrors the real-life experiences of one of our business people and does indirectly teach some conventions of business to the class participants.

The major writing assignment in Site #3 consisted of a 15-page case analysis similar to that found in Site #2. The difference between the two papers is that the paper in Site #3 was completed individually. This paper comprised 35% of the overall grade—the largest percentage given any task with the exception of the five quizzes, which also carried a weight of 35%. The teacher spends a paragraph on this assignment in the syllabus as well as four pages on a separate handout (discussed in chapter four). Due to my inability to secure any of the case analysis papers at the end of the term, detailed discussion of the project is not included in this study. However, the teacher's belief in having students apply their analytical skills is apparent in the importance he gives this written assignment.

The Site #3 instructor was the only one who responded to post-observation questions regarding the functions of writing in the classroom. From his responses, it is apparent that writing is important to him because it allows the students to apply the knowledge from the course to a specific situation of their choosing. In an email response, he writes:

In the management courses that I teach, I consider writing to be a major component of the learning process. Writing assignments require students to integrate the informational content of the course and to process the information in such a way that they have to articulate what they learned in their own words. Writing exercises enhance the learning process . . . writing forces the students to systematically apply ideas to a case they select from their personal experience. Thus, writing also helps students see the relevance of the ideas or concepts in real life.

He supports what "T" and "M" articulated in their interviews regarding Site #2; writing assignments help students "digest" complex material and apply it to their own experiences. This instructor emphasizes the importance of metacognition because his assignment calls for the application of learning to a situation. This is exactly the type of situation experienced by the three businesswomen in chapter two—they had to critically analyze how to attain a goal and make decisions based on the results of their analyses. While a discussion of genre conventions did not take place in the class sessions I



observed, they were covered in the handout. The need to think critically, however, was implied in the assignment that called for the students to struggle with which parts of the course content they would apply to their chosen situation.

This teacher differs from compositionists in his response to what characterizes good writing. Most compositionists teach the writing process and require mistakes to be edited but only after students have worked through invention and revision because this is when grammar errors are most likely to interfere with meaning. In business writing, however, grammar and spelling are focused on at the very beginning of the writing process. As this teacher writes, "good writing begins with basic grammatical skills. Students who cannot structure their ideas into correct forms of syntax and sentence structures are not able to communicate to others what they think or what they have learned." His response correlates to the corporate belief that grammar and punctuation are important to business communication as evidenced by the initial writing course offered where "S" works entitled "Grammar and Punctuation." This may mean that business students need to acquire these skills by the time they leave the university in order to be successful.

The genre conventions of business writing differs from that of composition. Therefore, if instructors wish to expose students to situations similar to those they will experience in the workplace, pedagogy must include explicit discussion of these conventions as well as rhetorical situations that allow students to think critically. Samples of this type of pedagogy will be discussed in chapter four.

#### COLLABORATION: OBSERVATIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS

There were many instances of collaboration in these three sites—some I observed and some I heard about from student participants. The fact that all three classes considered collaboration important correlates to one of the traits often found in corporate organizations today—team work. More interesting to me is the fact that in two of the three classes, the group effort culminated in a written product submitted for a grade. The lone site not including a collaborative written project was site #1, the expository writing class.

In site #1, group projects generally centered on in-class discussions of teacher determined topics and these activities will be discussed later in the chapter. Collaboration in site #3 was limited to duos that presented orally to the class in preparation of the "Case Analysis"

which was the culminating assignment of the quarter and completed individually. The collaboration took place off-campus and I was unable to observe these events. Consequently, there is no discussion of site #3's collaborative activities.

In site #2, the group collaborative presentation and paper was covered in the syllabus and a separate handout. The syllabus offered general information as to the purpose (assess critical thinking and communication), group composition (students were placed in groups based on where they lived), and grading percentage (14% of overall quarter grade) for the project. The handout consisted of more than three pages and laid out a step-by-step process that discusses many vital areas of the collaboration. These included how to begin working as a group, how to divide the labor, how to proceed with the decision-making process. Both "T" and "M" participated in the collaboration of sites #1 and #2. The collaborative efforts of site #1 will be discussed later in this chapter, but each of these students enjoyed the collaborative experience in site #2 even though they experienced conflict.

As we saw in chapter two, collaboration in the business environment differs from that of the classroom because of the hierarchical order inherent in business

groups. This hierarchy was not part of the collaborative efforts of site #2 and led to conflict over leadership.

"M" discussed his role in the group project as that of one of several "stronger group leaders." He describes the experience when he states:

the group presentation [is] a real good idea for student participation . . . We had a couple of things we had to write on . . . we had to make a summary of the module reading . . . summarize each of our decisions . . . then we actually had to get up in front of class and . . . present it.

Besides believing the group project engaged students in the learning process, "M" also describes the conflict inherent in collaboration where no hierarchy is imposed. When asked how the group divided the responsibility, "M" replied:

We met, laid out the ground rules who's going to do what and first we took kind of volunteers and then we kind of . . . said well, you didn't volunteer, do you want to do this? . . . then we all had our parts and we just kind of disbanded--we had very brief meetings no longer than--our longest meeting was 15 minutes.

We tried to distribute it [responsibility for writing] fairly, but what happened is me and two other members of the group were kind of the stronger group leaders or members. So, we . . . pretty much did everything because we had a couple of people who . . . didn't speak the greatest English. So, their writing reflected that, so we had them write something, but we wound up rewriting everything that they did. So the writing pretty much fell on three of us.

It is apparent that "M" and a couple of other group members took charge of the project perhaps at the expense of non-

native English speaking members and the potential knowledge they could contribute. However, despite the conflict, the collaboration proved to be an exciting learning experience for "M" when he saw the group's process reflected in the teacher's lecture. He says:

Anytime you get into a group, I guess, I mean there's always this expected set of behaviors... .I'd never really known that people actually studied it and pointed it out and documented it and everything. It was interesting because as [the teacher] was lecturing, I thought back to our group and thought, yeah; I remember when that happened . . . .

"M's" excitement at seeing his experiences recognized in lecture material supports the need for pedagogy that engages students in class projects that allows the learning to come to life. "T's" experience mirrors that of "M" but he faced greater conflict in his group.

"T" shared that the group project was the activity in the class where he engaged the most. As he states, "I had a great time . . .I believe you should have fun . . .when you have fun at something, you learn. You just happen to learn more when you're enjoying what you're doing." This is an important outcome for "T" in his group project because initially there was a fight for leadership. "T" explains:

the thing that I saw that was very difficult was that everyone [in the group] was equals. There was a kind of a fight to [see] who would be the

leader, and I'm used to always being the leader.

And, another person in the group was also used to that—it was pretty much a compromise that both of us were leaders. And, um, the first few days were kind of difficult cause it was kind of like a pursuit of power. But, we realized that both of us can be leaders at the same time and work together as a team which worked probably the most efficient.

It is interesting to note that above and beyond the "fun" and academic knowledge "T" gained while participating in the group project, he also learned a valuable lesson in how to resolve conflict. Not only did the two stronger members of the group resolve the conflict, "T" actually sees the compromise as "efficient" and beneficial, very necessary traits for success both in the university and outside it. "T" concludes by calling for more collaborative activities when he suggests that he would "make more group work, maybe group activities than just lecturing" when asked how he might restructure the pedagogy in this class.

The collaboration in site #2 worked very well to engage students in a class where the size of enrollment tends to call for lecture. In fact, each of the students interviewed would have liked to see more of this type of activity. They felt it was fun and they learned a lot at the same time. This particular project reflected many of the activities described by the women in chapter two: summary, analysis, collaboration, and the need to argue

effectively. These same two students were enrolled in site #1 where the collaborative activities were met with resistance.

In site #1, one of the collaborative activities I observed actually led to a confrontation between the instructor and a female student. This occurred when the instructor announced that students would break into groups and discuss two business letters to be used in a common essay midterm that included all 306 writing classes (a university requirement). Like site #2, the groups' compositions was determined by the instructor and, in this site, was based on commonality of concentration within the Business major. After 35 minutes of discussion by the teacher as to the purpose of the letters (models of business letter writing), she put the students into groups without any formal instructions. I chose to observe group number four consisting of five students (2 male and 3 female, including one non-native English speaker). These participants discussed the purpose/goal they were to accomplish and then decided to ask the instructor what they were supposed to do. The instructor replied that they were to continue discussing the two letters to prepare for the upcoming midterm and building on knowledge already provided in the class. At this point, a female English speaking

student became very irate and said that this was "too much studying for [her]." She then left the group and the classroom. The group fell silent until a male non-native English speaking student asked the teacher a question I could not overhear. The female student returned to the classroom and group and said that she thought she'd ask for her money back for this class because it was just like high school. Still irate, the female student turned to the non-native English speaking male student and said, "bone up on your grammar" as a suggestion for the upcoming midterm. I believe the female student's marginalization of the non-native English speaking student indicates her displeasure at finding herself in a group where she believed she had the most knowledge. The female student then proceeded to share with the group her thoughts on what the midterm prompts would be and continued to complain about group work. The female student's inclusion in this particular group may account for her anger.

During this time, the teacher had remained silent, standing by the group. The teacher then tried to help the group understand the purpose of collaborative work and potential areas for the upcoming exam. Once the teacher left the group, the female student began discussing personal issues not related to the course. Other students



in the group followed her lead and the group separated by gender to discuss non-related topics. During the break, the teacher shared with me that she believes in collaborative work even if students stray from the assigned topic because it helps students bond with one another. While the teacher's goal for including collaborative projects in her pedagogy may have been met, the group activity caused anger to at least one student. Future pedagogy might include detailed instructions as to goals and negotiation as to group composition.

On another occasion, the teacher told the students to break into groups for discussion, and three minutes after she had made the request, the students were out of their groups pursuing other activities. Some were standing in line to speak with the teacher regarding previous grades and assignments; others were studying for upcoming exams in other courses; and some had collected their belongings and left the classroom. These instances were typical of the results that took place when the teacher attempted to engage students in this class in collaborative projects and can be contrasted with the results seen in site #2 through the responses of "T" and "M."

"T" saw positive reasons for continued collaboration in site #1 when he states he would like to

see more group activities . . . I like group activities, I enjoy it. It [group activities] causes a person to be forced to be more social . . . That helped me because I was a shy guy for a while. . . I see [that] through group activities and . . . presentations . . . you improve your social skills and . . . the more practice you do, the more comfortable you are.

"T" appreciates the social applications and learning he experienced in group work in this site just as he did in site #2 aside from any academic restrictions or expectations. "M" also enjoyed the group work but had some suggestions for making it less conflicted and more productive in site #1. He shared his feelings about the group work in this site when he said that because "writing [is so] individual," improvement in collaborative activities may be impossible. This contradicts his experience when writing for the collaborative project in Site #2 where he and several others controlled the writing process. It appears that when group activities are well delineated and structured, the results tend to be viewed as collaboration whereas with less structured, informal group activities, students still perceive each others as individuals. "M" described the group experience in this class when he says, "when she [the teacher] puts us in groups, we just kind of sit there and play around. I mean, we're supposed to be coming up with things, and I don't know, it doesn't really happen." When questioned as to

what might happen to ensure the group stays on task, "M" replies, "Have something that you have to turn in for credit... or even extra credit, or anything that you're going to be handing in as opposed to an oral discussion after the groups are done." When probed further about whether he feels comfortable being required to either submit something for a grade or lead a discussion orally after group work is completed, "M" shows maturity and a sanguine understanding of the business world when he replies:

if you're choosing this major [business], I think being put on the spot is important—even if you don't like it, you have to know how to deal with it. It's going to happen [in the business world]—either you have to make on-the-spot decisions, you have to make a presentation to other co-workers, anything like that, you've got to be put on the spot. So, while it may seem harsh to some students who don't like it, that's what this world is about.

"M" showed a true understanding for what is required of a lot of business employees. As seen in chapter two, deadlines, corporate restraints, and the pressure of "selling" ideas to superiors and colleagues are major components of many corporate positions. Explicit discussion of this type of business environment was not part of any class sessions I observed. "M" developed his knowledge of the business environment from his experience on-the-job. What "M" is suggesting is that the assignments

and expectations found in university classrooms model the real business world and that the parallels be made explicit.

The most obvious difference between the collaborative activities in these two sites centers on the parameters and expectations set by the instructors. In site #2, the apparent importance given the group project by the teacher is reflected in the detailed, step-by-step procedures contained in the handout. More importance is reflected in the grade that accompanies the project and its inclusion in the class syllabus. The student comments as to the productive nature of the collaborative experience and the knowledge gained from participating lend validity to the assumption that clear, concise instructions and reward/punishment in the form of a grade are very important in group work. This does not mean to imply that the group activities in site #1 did not achieve the goals of the instructor. Her including collaborative activities was an effort to establish camaraderie among the students, but this is a limited goal not related to the business world. However, the negative results from her attempts to engage the students collaboratively as seen through "M's" comments, appear to point to the need for more detail and structure surrounding the purpose of the activities.

Site #3 also introduced collaboration by requiring that the students "self-select" into dyads

To review and apply the central concepts covered in the reading assignments to one of the corresponding cases suggested for that particular session or to the cases which the students selected for their integrative case analysis. (syllabus, p. 4).

The dyads were responsible for presenting an oral summary of the application of the concepts to their chosen case, but the two-to-three page written summary was developed on an individual basis. I observed several of these oral presentations and the students appeared to enjoy working together. I did not have access to their written summaries for inclusion in this study. The importance of the collaborative effort is made by the weight of contribution this project has on the overall quarter grade--20%--as well as the emphasis given it in the syllabus.

The instructors in sites #2 and #3 understood the need for detailed instruction in genre knowledge, metacognitive activities, and explicit goals for the collaborative projects. Hence, their handouts reflect these areas. Without this type of emphasis, the attempts at collaboration in site #1 proved non-productive and at times frustrating. On one occasion, the lack of preset goals and parameters even led to one student's anger. Comparing the results of the collaboration accomplished in the three

sites supports the production of a concrete product such as a written document to engage the students in learning genre knowledge and applying it to a situation similar to those of the women in chapter two. The research indicates that the more structured and well-defined the activity in the classroom, the more positive the results.

This chapter compares the similarities and differences between the type of writing and activities taking place in the business classroom and those taking place in the world of business seen in chapter two. These results lead to the conclusion that pedagogy should include assignments that explicitly teach genre knowledge combined with metacognitive activities that allow students to apply this knowledge to specific business situations. This type of pedagogy will help students succeed in the workplace and is discussed in chapter four.

## CHAPTER FOUR

On the whole, instructors hope to develop a pedagogical approach that engages students in the course material. One of the ways to accomplish this goal is through assignments that assist students in learning and owning the knowledge offered in the course. With the help of the classroom observations and input from the three businesswomen, this chapter will focus on which classroom assignments accomplished this goal and attempt to determine why. It will also offer suggestions for future classes.

### ASSIGNMENTS THAT LINKED BUSINESS AND WRITING

In chapter two, the case analysis project for Site #2 was discussed at length. The students interviewed discussed how much they enjoyed this activity even though both experienced conflict. The written product of the activity was thoroughly detailed and explained in a three-plus page handout, and this handout served to support the paper's importance. The assignment called for the students to use several skills required for effective business writing by including explanation of specific genre knowledge. In addition, skills necessary to analyze a problem, develop a solution, and effectively defend the solution selected called for critical thinking on the students' parts. This assignment was successful because it

supplemented the teacher's lecturing and helped the students engage in the learning process and apply the lecture material to a business situation. As the students noted, it helped them see lecture material come to life.

For the writing assignment designed as the culminating product of Site #3, the teacher also developed a separate four-page handout covering the details and expectations of the writing assignment. The sub-topics included those areas of the assignment pertaining to the final product: Selecting an Organization and Topic, Content, Method, Format and Other Requirements, Outline of Content, and Analysis of Problems or Issues. By explicitly detailing the goals of the assignment and the genre conventions, the teacher alleviated any concerns the students may have had concerning these areas. During my class observations, the instructor did not discuss this assignment, nor did the students bring it up. Consequently, it appears that the handout and syllabus answered most questions regarding the assignment.

The writing assignments in Site #1 were problematized by the university's requirement of a "common essay midterm." Because of this requirement, the students would have benefited from assignments that allowed them to experience metacognitive critical understanding of genre



differences particularly when they are applied to different rhetorical situations. The teacher might have included assignments that helped students realize the differences between a comparison essay for the midterm and a business genre that called for conveying information in a specific situation. By focusing strictly on the genres inherent to English Composition classes, she did not teach her students the conventions of business genres nor did she give them an opportunity to experience business situations. This instructor did lecture on some characteristics of business writing, but the fact that they were discussed verbally and centered on personal topics caused the students to ignore them. "T" and "M" have expressed their displeasure that no business writing took place in this classroom. The lack of business writing can be blamed on the topics chosen for the writing assignments, the lack of explicit instruction on business genres, and the exclusion of activities calling for metacognitive activities to apply the genre knowledge. One of the most interesting results of the observations has to do with how subject matter is presented in the classroom—either verbally or through writing.

I noticed that the only writing (note-taking) done by the students in all three classes occurred when the teachers actually wrote information on the board or

uncovered new information on an overhead. This tends to support the belief students have that if the teacher is merely lecturing, it is not as important as when he/she writes information down. Consequently, when the teacher in Site #1 lectured on the genre conventions for business writing, most students simply did not pay attention to what was being discussed. This may have contributed to the perception by "T" and "L" that business writing did not occur in the class. In addition, the choice of topics for the writing assignments in this site was not business-oriented but personal in nature. This also supported the belief on the part of students that the course was not designed to improve business writing; it was designed to improve writing in general.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE ASSIGNMENTS

As John C. Bean states, "a mixture of professional and personal writing . . . can be achieved through three different categories of assignments . . . Nongraded exploratory writing . . . Thesis-governed academic writing . . . [and] Essays written in other styles and forms that stand against conventional academic writing and create different ways of 'seeing'" (52). A combination of all three writing categories allows students the opportunity to use their own social constructedness while learning the

conventions of a variety of genres. This type of pedagogy may have assisted the teacher in site #1. By combining various styles, forms, genres, and activities, the teacher could have encouraged critical thinking on the part of the students by asking them to select a particular genre to attain a goal in a specific situation. By doing this, the students would mirror the activities of the three businesswomen in chapter two.

An assignment that creates a business situation and calls for genre knowledge can be found in an article by John D. Beard, a professor of Business Communication. In the article, Beard discusses four principles inherent to effective business writing. These four principles include Goodwill Building, Course of Action, Bottom Line, and Most Important First. He suggests that any assignments given to business students call for the use of these four principles and offers one assignment that reflects how these might be incorporated. The assignment includes a case summary detailing a customer complaint and asks the student writer to "assume the role of a Training Assistant and write a complete memo on the . . . problem to . . . the marketing representative, who has the habit of not reading his mail" (104). This assignment incorporates many situations found in business writing; it has a customer problem and a reader

who does not read his mail, and it calls for some action to take place. Beard believes this type of assignment responds "directly to reader habits in the business world [and] will help students to write successfully as they depart from writing in the academic world" (108). This type of situation and genre may be what the students expected in Site #1. This assignment gives students the benefits of using the conventions of a business genre and situation and they may leave a course with the perception that it included writing inherent to the business discipline.

On many occasions during my observations in all three classes, the teachers' attempts to engage the students in discussions centered on issues pertaining to assigned readings were met with silence. When probed, the students responded that they simply had not done the assigned reading. I believe these instances are part of most classrooms regardless of whether the class is undergraduate or graduate. One of the methods Bean discusses for eliminating these silences is called *Cold-Calling*. This method calls for the teacher to select a student to respond to a question pertaining to the assignment. Indeed this method can strike "terror" in the hearts of students but Bean states that it can be effective "if wedded in some way

to warmth and care [and] can be a powerful means of stimulating critical thinking" (179). It takes a nurturing instructor who truly cares about the students to be able to incorporate this pedagogical approach in the classroom, but it does keep students on their toes and prepared to discuss reading assignments. As "M" related in his interview, if you are a business major, you must be able to "think on your feet" and experience this type of situation because that's how it is in the business world. Consequently, this method may be appropriate in business classrooms.

Analysis, research, summary, effective argument, and correct grammar and punctuation are characteristics of business writing. To expose students to these characteristics, one assignment might include conducting ethnographic research on a business position they hope to fill one day to determine what the position requires for success and how writing contributes to that success. They would observe the individual over a course of several weeks sharing and discussing what they have observed with their classmates. They might summarize each observation as part of the overall task and analyze what they have seen, what it might mean, and what they need to learn to fill the position. The final piece of the assignment could consist of compiling the data from the various observations

focusing on how writing functions in that particular job and how their writing at the university helps them prepare for success. This type of assignment would benefit business majors in several ways. First, they would learn a type of research not generic in the business world and still observe research inherent in business such as understanding markets, for example. Second, they could learn first-hand what the job they wish to get requires in the way of skills. Third, they could begin to connect the writing tasks they are asked to complete at the university with what they see writing do in the workplace. Their findings would also prove beneficial to instructors for the development of future pedagogy.

As we learned from the three businesswomen in chapter two, most business communication in their jobs takes the forms of letters, memos, and E-mail. The written document can serve as a legally binding contract, a way to convey information, and a means of persuasion. The writing process serves as a way of problem solving, thinking critically, or reorganizing an approach towards a goal.

One medium that appears to be growing at a rapid pace in the business world and should not be ignored by the university is E-mail. In Sites #1 and #3, students were required to have a university email account in order to

participate in listserv discussions. In none of my observations did this particular requirement surface. Neither the students nor the teachers referred to this pedagogical tool leading me to believe it was not used to any great frequency.

If, as the businesswomen have suggested, E-mail is becoming the choice of corporations to convey all types of communication and is the most frequent medium used, then business classrooms at universities should include it in their class requirements. A listserv can function in a variety of ways. It can be a site collaboration between all classroom participants to discover new knowledge and share ideas. Care must be taken when introducing students to the use of E-mail because it can be a site of contention due to the difficulty writers have presenting concepts in words without the ability to modify statements and recognize reactions in their readers as can be done in a "live" discussion. As seen from "C's" description of how E-mail is used in her company, it can deliver "good" news or the devastating news of massive company layoffs. If this medium is so pervasive in corporate America, the university should make sure its business students have the opportunity to hone their skills by using this it for classroom activities.

When using E-mail in the business classroom, instructors must make students aware of the differences between acceptable E-mail on a personal basis and what corporations expect from E-mail communication between their employees and headquarters. When probed, each of the three businesswomen expressed their understanding that E-mail within their organizations represents the individual who sends it. Correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation are expected by company superiors and any laxness in these areas is considered a weakness. The competitive nature of business demands that written products be error-free because they represent the individual and the corporate employer to the outside world.

Assignments for business classes should include writing because writing helps students learn. This has been discussed in chapter one and supported by the experiences of students in chapter three. Writing for the three businesswomen in chapter two is the means they use to accomplish specific goals in a specific situation. But the writing must consist of several elements. First, the teacher must explicitly instruct the students in the conventions of the specific genre being studied. Second, the writing assignment must call for critical thinking on the part of the students. The students must be able to



apply genre knowledge to a variety of different situations. By participating in metacognitive activities, the students come to understand how the genre conventions change based on situation and how they as writers and business people can modify a genre to fit a specific goal. By combining these two elements in writing assignments, students have exposure to the types of genres and situations experienced by business people and will be better prepared to succeed in the workplace.

#### CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to discover areas of similarity between writing in the workplace and writing in the university business classroom. Some of the most interesting comments have come from students themselves who support composition theorists in their belief that writing leads to cognition. There has also been a correlation between what writing does for the businesswomen in chapter two and what it does for the students in chapter three. In each case, writing helps them learn, solve problems, analyze, and persuade. The goals of each group of writers may be different—the businesswomen want more impressive performance evaluations, the students want good grades—but each recognizes the importance of being able to write effectively. Each of the teachers included writing in

their pedagogy, but in one case the pedagogy did not reflect explicit instruction in genre conventions nor did it offer the metacognitive activities necessary to develop critical thinking on the part of the students.

Writing process is important to the success of the three businesswomen in chapter two. The women have the ability to assess a rhetorical situation and produce a written document based on their assessment to achieve a specific goal. These women have gained this knowledge and ability through years of experience on their jobs. One of them, "L," is still feeling discomfort as she attempts to learn a new way of critically thinking about a familiar genre at a new company. The university environment can help students experience similar situations by placing them in situations where they have to sift through the genre knowledge they have and determine how to attain a goal for a specific situation. Initially, this may cause some discomfort for the students, but this type of discomfort is experienced in the business world as seen through "L's" comments.

If the university wants to see its students succeed after graduation, it is vitally important that writing continue to be an important element in every classroom and every discipline. The knowledge gained from this research

can be transferred outside the College of Business because writing's link to cognitive development occurs across disciplinary boundaries. Whether the writing is personal in nature or is in response to specific situations calling for genre knowledge, writing helps students learn and succeed.

As Janet Emig stated in her research on writing cited in the first chapter of this study:

Writing is learned behavior . . .an artificial process [that] . . .must provide its own context. . . . Writing usually results in a visible graphic product . . .[and] because there is a product involved, writing tends to be a more responsible and committed act than talking. . . .[and] Because writing is often our representation of the world made visible, embodying both process and product, writing is more readily a form and source of learning than talking. (Villanueva 9-10)

As the students realized, writing helped them when they had to restate concepts in their own words. The businesswomen understood the importance of writing's representation of them and their companies. This study supports how important writing is to cognition. Whether in the work place or the university classroom, writing is a very important element for success and classroom pedagogy must include writing and activities that lead to students' abilities to recognize which genre conventions to apply to a situation in order to succeed. Writing assignments must include explicit

instruction in genre conventions and application of this genre knowledge in rhetorical situations. Only by doing this, will universities succeed in preparing students for success once they graduate.

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